



# ***Buildup in the Gulf***

Story by Heike Hasenauer

Photos by Heike Hasenauer and Steve Harding



Soldiers of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, race to a Patriot launcher during a Scud drill. The ADA unit is one of several tapped to provide air defense coverage during the U.S. buildup in Kuwait.

Steve Harding







**Newly arrived in Kuwait, soldiers of the 3rd Bde., 3rd Inf. Div., prepare their Bradley fighting vehicles for movement to forward camps.**

Heike Hasenauer







March 2003





## *Buildup in the Gulf*

**I**n early January all signs pointed to another war against Iraq as soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade flooded into Kuwait — some 4,000 over a four-day period — said LTC Geoff Ward, the brigade's executive officer.

British, German and Czech soldiers were among coalition-force soldiers on the ground. And U.S. military officials called the influx of forces the largest military buildup since the Gulf War.

During the first two weeks in

Steve Harding contributed to this article.

January, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld signed two large deployment orders to send a total of 62,000 military personnel, including thousands of Marines, to the Gulf region. And Defense Department officials said the United States could have as many as 150,000 troops in the Middle East by February.

Just a few hours after 3rd Inf. Div. soldiers of the Fort Benning, Ga.-based 3rd Bde. began pouring into Kuwait International Airport in the early morning hours of Jan. 11, PV2 Dallas Morrow and other members of the 1st Battalion, 15th Inf. Regiment,

found themselves in a sea of equipment at Camp Doha — the Combined Forces Land Component Command headquarters for coalition forces in Kuwait.

Their Bradley fighting vehicles and M1A1 Abrams tanks surrounded them. And cases of rations and water cluttered the marshalling area, along with everything from tool kits, oil and engine coolant to duffel bags, individual weapons and personal body armor, all of which they packed tightly into the vehicles before convoying across the desert to forward base camps later in the day.

The brigade had been in country

**A convoy of Army vehicles — a common sight during the buildup — rolls along a Kuwaiti highway en route to positions near the Iraqi border.**

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**Soldiers of the Army Reserve's 299th Engineer Co. practice launching floating bridge sections during training at a Kuwaiti naval base. The bridges could prove vital for crossing Iraq's several large rivers.**

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earlier, from May to November, to participate in Exercise Desert Spring. “We went home just long enough to get a taste of what we’re missing,” Morrow said.

The division’s 2nd Bde., from Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., had remained in country since its participation in the exercise in May. And the division’s 1st Bde. was expected to begin arriving on Jan. 20, Ward said.

Bulldozers and forklifts rumbled about over wide expanses of desert, creating obvious sites for additional camps. And, while information provided to the media was extremely guarded, representatives in the area

**Members of Btry. C beef up the overhead cover on one of the several bunkers dotting the unit’s compound.**





**Fully armed and ready to fire, Patriot launchers of Btry. C, 2nd Bn., 1st ADA, point skyward near a U.S. staging area under construction in the Kuwaiti desert.**

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saw numerous convoys of tracked vehicles and other equipment and busloads of soldiers being transported to forward-operating bases near the Iraqi border.

A camp located some 26 kilometers from Kuwait's northern border with Iraq had been renamed by soldiers of the 2nd Bde. Combat Team as Camp New York. Additional new camps in the desert included Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Virginia, said 2nd BCT spokeswoman MSG Emma Krouser.

A few kilometers from the Iraqi border, soldiers of the 2nd Bde. conducted target practice and live-fire drills in a makeshift MOUT village,

**In Btry. C's command center, soldiers monitor the progress of one of the many drills conducted during the buildup.**

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IN KUWAIT





**Beefed-up training for soldiers in Kuwait during the buildup included close-range target practice for 3rd Inf. Div. troops at a range constructed in the desert near the Iraqi border.**

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and the battalion surgeon, Dr. (CPT) Erik Schobitz, conducted advanced first-aid classes.

"We're definitely training for going to war," said PFC Fernando Machado of 2nd Bde. "We've been practicing clearing trenches, knocking out bunkers, clearing buildings, breaching and bypassing obstacles, conducting NBC training and preparing for counterattacks."

"I'm thinking what everybody else is thinking," said 19-year-old PFC Bobby Lansdon of 2nd Bde. "I really don't know what to think. I'm excited about serving my country, but at the same time, I'm a little scared."

**Her NBC mask firmly in place, SPC Paris McField waits for the all-clear during a Scud drill at the Btry. C, 2nd Bn., 1st ADA Patriot site.**

Back at Camp New York, SSG Anthony McCloyn and other members of Co. A, 10th Engineer Bn., pulled maintenance on M113 armored personnel carriers loaded down with large fluorescent cones and small bright flags that would be used to mark safe passages through enemy minefields.

"We've been training nonstop," McCloyn said, "and all our training to this point has focused on clearing the minefields. We've got to get it right the first time, so that the tanks and Bradleys can move forward. If they can't get to the front, they can't engage. It's that simple."

Elsewhere, soldiers of Battery C, 2nd Bn., 1st Air Defense Artillery Regt., a Patriot missile battery from Fort Bliss, Texas, continued to conduct





Scud-missile drills near Camp Arifjan, home of the Kuwait army's 15th Mubarek Armored Brigade.

And on the water, at the Port of Shuaiba, the Army logistics support vessel *SP4 James A. Loux* delivered medical supplies and equipment belonging to the 205th Area Support Medical Bn., an Army National Guard unit from Kansas City, Mo.

At the nearby Kuwait Naval Base several other Army vessels — including utility landing craft, tugboats and the newly commissioned high-speed theater support vessel *Spearhead* — awaited their next missions in support of the buildup of U.S. forces.

**Infantrymen of the 2nd Bde., 3rd Inf. Div., prepare to clear a building during live-fire MOUT training at a site near Camp New York.**

Steve Harding







**Jersey walls at Camp Doha carry the logos and patches of units that have previously served in the Gulf region.**

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**Soldiers line up for dinner at Camp New York's dining facility. The desert outpost saw its population increase dramatically as the buildup continued.**

The naval base was also the site of bridge-building training for soldiers of the Army Reserve's 299th Engineer Co. from Fort Belvoir, Va., who repeatedly practiced launching and assembling a floating bridge — an asset that would be crucial to coalition forces should they be required to cross the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, among others in Iraq.

Crew chief and raft commander SSG Matthew O'Brien was responsible for "anything going on in the water as a bridge is being assembled," he said.

During training in January, the 299th constructed a raft, which consisted of several interior "bays" with ramps. "The ferry bridge is the quickest way to get military forces to shore," said O'Brien. "We can trans-

port anything the military has, up to 70 tons at any one time, over a 215-meter bridge span."

CPT Marty Norvel of the 416th Engr. Command, a liaison officer to the three Army bridge companies that had either personnel or equipment in Kuwait in January, said the "multi-bridge companies would allow commanders at the highest level to project combat power across water or dry gaps, such as ditches and ravines."

Two other bridge companies of the 99th Regional Support Command — the 459th Engr. Co. from West Virginia and 671st Engr. Co., from Oregon — were expected to arrive in Kuwait in the coming weeks.

In January, as coalition forces continued arriving in Kuwait, marrying up with their equipment and moving

into forward positions, O'Brien and other 3rd ID soldiers conveyed their concern about possible war.

"Sure I'm scared," one young private said. "Who wouldn't be? But we're all well trained and ready to do our jobs."

And training was the key to keeping soldiers' fears at bay as they awaited possible action, said MG Henry W. Stratman, deputy commanding general of Third U.S. Army/U.S. Army Forces Central Command and the Coalition Forces Land Component Command.

"It would be foolish for soldiers not to have some concerns," Stratman said. "We're in a dangerous business, and the possibility of action gives us all something to think about. But that's why we train so hard — so we'll be



As the battalion surgeon looks on, soldiers of the 3rd ID's 2nd Bde. practice their combat lifesaving skills during a lull in the live-fire MOUT training.



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ready to execute any mission the president gives us. And I think our soldiers are superbly trained and ready for whatever comes.”

SGT Jose Blanco of the 3rd Inf. Div.'s 3rd Bde., 1st Bn., 15th Inf., summed up the feeling many soldiers expressed in early January as they trained for war in the vast Kuwaiti desert.

“Hopefully, the Iraqis will surrender quickly,” Blanco said. “A lot of the guys are just tired of playing Ping-Pong with Saddam Hussein.”

“I just want to get on with it. Let's go,” echoed O'Brien. “Let's do the job for the nation and go home.” □

**Members of Co. A, 10th Engineer Bn., load fluorescent cones — used to mark lanes through minefields — aboard their M-113 at Camp New York.**

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